

Institute for Policy Studies
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Barometer 2007

Electorate: Features and attitudes

Preliminary results of the survey of Georgia's population, December 1-10, 2007

The survey was carried out in December 1-10, 2007 on 1100 respondents (44.0% male and 56.0% female in all 9 regions of Georgia, autonomous republic of Ajaria and the capital Tbilisi). The sample was stratified and random, so that to be proportional to the number of population in regions, in urban and rural settlements, to gender and age groups.

The survey instrument consisted of 152 questions, which referred to economics, governance, politics, elections and values.

Interviews were taken face to face, step size was 4, confidence level 95%, standard error 3%.

For the first time, throughout the long experience of conducting surveys, the institute encountered difficulties in obtaining consent for participation. Low was the readiness of participants to express their attitudes to the problems that the country faces and to estimate the effectiveness of governance. Especially big was reluctance to evaluate the politicians. This explains a number of option *Difficult to say* chosen as an answer on politically sensitive issues.

Below are analyzed only the answers to the questions pertaining to elections. The results are discussed from the viewpoint of electorate groups: Supporters of Saakashvili, supporters of all other 6 candidates for presidency and of those who have not expressed their choice.

Background

The situation, preceding administration of the survey is unique due to several reasons:

- For the first time during country's statehood the population faces a real choice, the name of the winner in elections is not clear;
- Elections has been preceded by mass protest rallies, crackdown of them by force, closure of independent TV channels *Imedi* and *Caucasia*, declaration of emergency rule and consequently its abolition.
- Elections are unplanned and are carried out in a short period after its announcement, so that the candidates did not have enough time to formulate the programs, plan the election campaign and mobilize their resources.
- The survey was carried out 45-35 days before elections. The Central Electorate Committee registered 7 candidates. Among them is ex-President Saakashvili, who

stepped down for taking part in elections, Levan Gachechiladze has been nominated by United Opposition, all other candidates, i.e. 4 party candidates (David Gamkrelidze, Shalva Natelashvili, Giorgi Maisashvili and Irine Sarishvili) and an independent candidate Badri Patarkatsishvili are not competing with each other but are rather united against Saakashvili.

Main Results

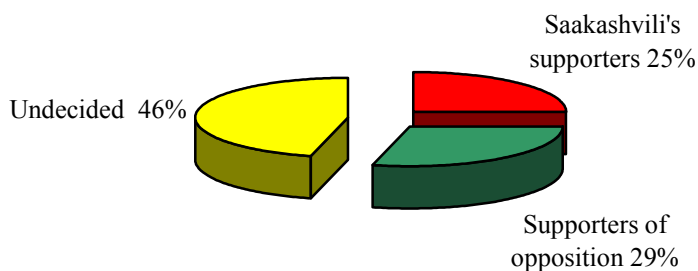
Electorate

For comparative analysis and for clarifying the similarities and dissimilarities of the supporters of presidential candidates, respondents were grouped in the following ways:

Group I: Saakashvili supporters

Group II: Supporters of all remaining 6 candidates

Group III: Undecided, those who had not so far decided for whom to vote (26.0%), or refused to reveal their decision (13.9%), or decided not to vote for anyone (3.5%) or did not intend to vote at all (2.4%).

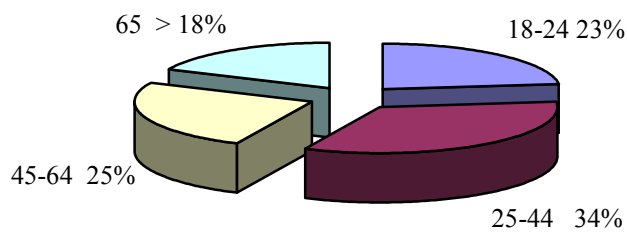


Gr.1. Distribution of electorate

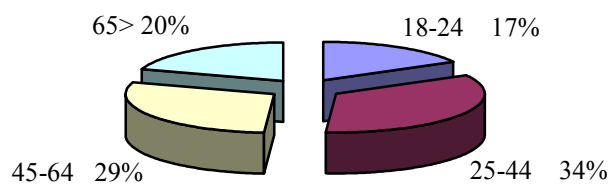
Respondents' features

The three groups differ by a number of background features.

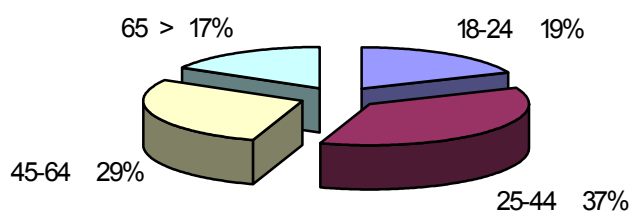
Compared to others among Saakashvili supporters prevail persons in the age range of 18-24, among opposition members persons older than 45 are more numerous.



Gr.2. Distribution of Saakashvili's supporters by age

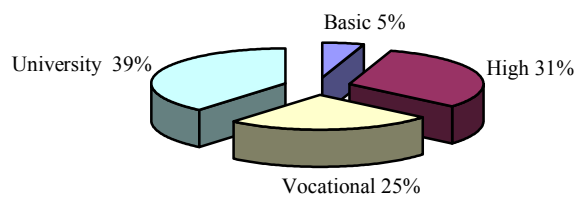


Gr.3. Distribution of opposition supporters by age

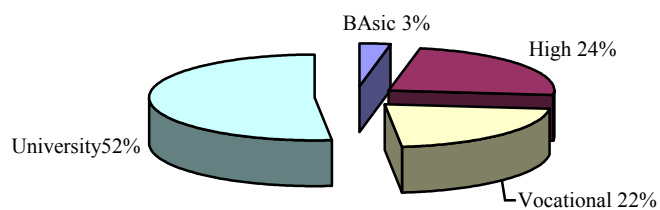


Gr.4. Distribution of undecided by age

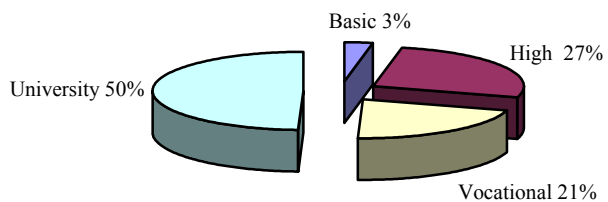
Among Saakashvili's supporters prevail persons with the high and basic education, while among opposition supporters people with University degree/students are more numerous



Gr.5. Distribution of Saakashvili's supporters by education status

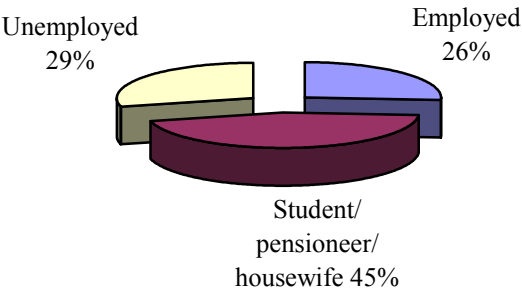


Gr.6. Distribution of opposition supporters by education status

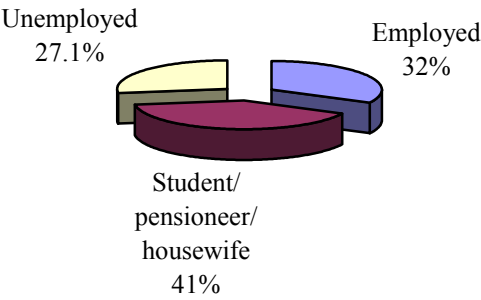


Gr.7. Distribution of undecided by education status

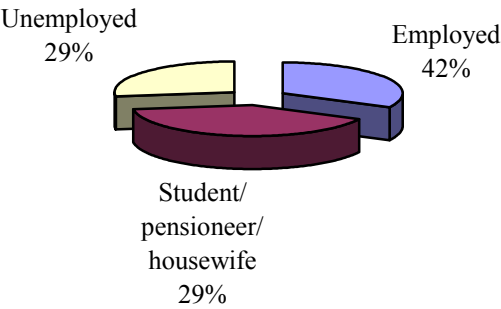
Among Saakashvili and opposition supporters there are more people who can be assumed not to be seeking employment, these are housewives, pensioners and students. The biggest share of employed people is in the group of undecided.



Gr.8. Distribution of Saakashvili supporters by employment status



Gr.9. Distribution of opposition supporters by employment status



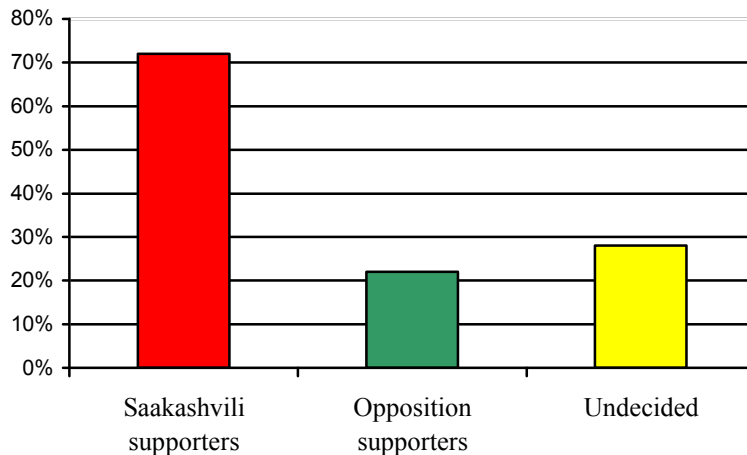
Gr.10. Distribution of undecided by employment status

Estimations of electorate

Below are presented estimations that electorate makes on the issues concerning governance, problems of the country and possible risks, events important for Georgia. The estimations concern the trust to institutions, media and political leaders, extent of democracy and foreign orientations as well.

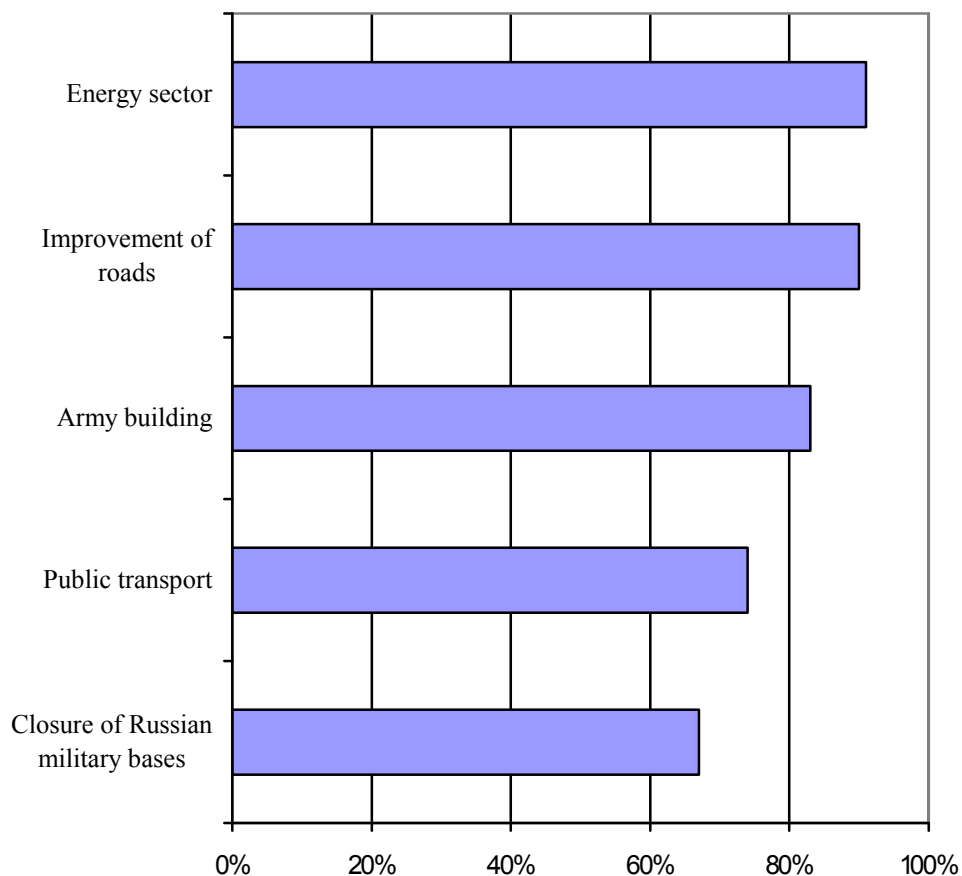
Governance

37.1% of the surveyed considers Georgia to be on the right path of development. Almost the same amount thinks that this is not so and 25.2% finds difficult to answer the question.



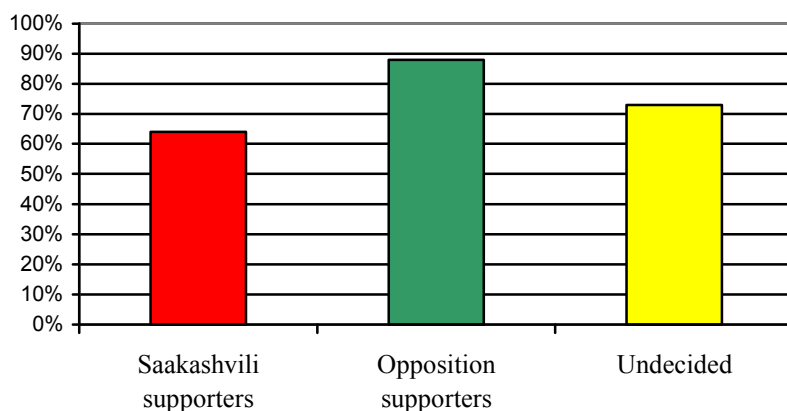
Gr.11. Question: *Is Georgia on the right path of development?* Answer option: *Is on the right path*

For the evaluation of the effectiveness of governance, respondents were presented with a 30 item long list of activities. Electorate does not differ in any significant way in evaluation. Improvement of infrastructure, army building and closure of Russian military bases are considered as big successes of the government.



Gr.12.Successful government activities

The credit is to be given to the people in power for combating corruption on everyday life level. Very few is the number of persons (3.0% at most-in the sphere of health services) who acknowledged giving a bribe. But the situation is different concerning the involvement of people in power in corruption. 74.8% of the surveyed is convinced about the involvement of political elite. So thinks a bigger portion of opposition supporters.



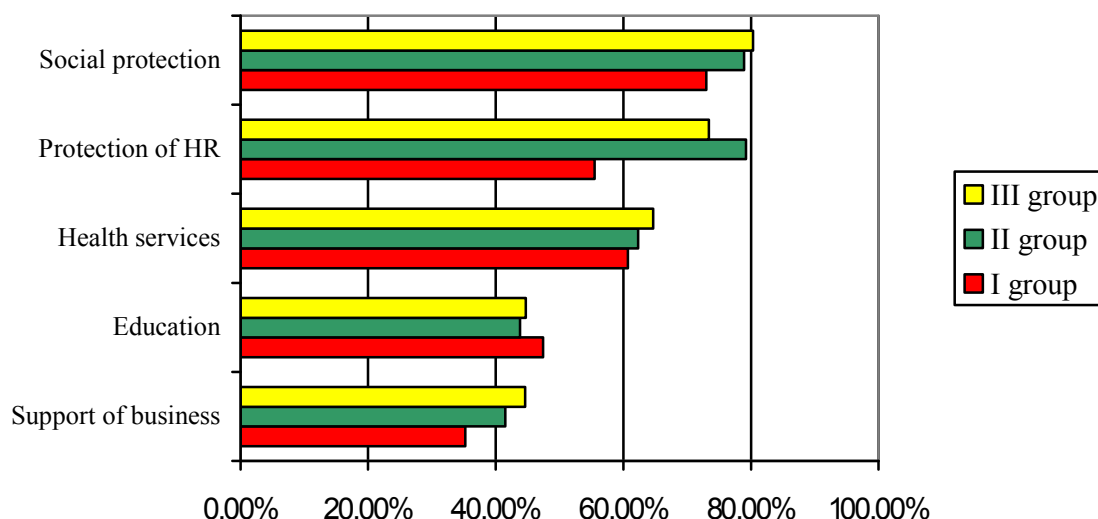
Gr.13. Question: *In your opinion, are people in power or their kin and close friends involved in corruption?* Answer: *yes*

Problems and possible threats

Population considers as the most important the following spheres:

1. Social security (78.1%)
2. Protection of Human Rights (70.5%)
3. Health services (62.5%)
4. Education (44.5%)
5. Support of business (40.8%)

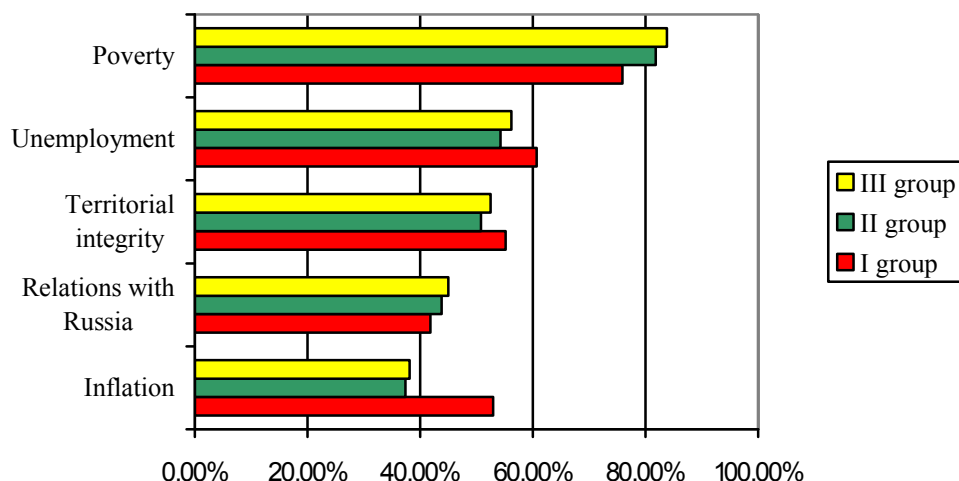
The difference between the groups is the most striking in ascribing importance to the protection of Human Rights. Much smaller portion of Saakashvili supporters considers it crucial.



Gr.14. Five, the most important for Georgia spheres

From the 23 item list we asked the respondents to choose 5, the most important problems for today's Georgia. The most often selected were the following problems:

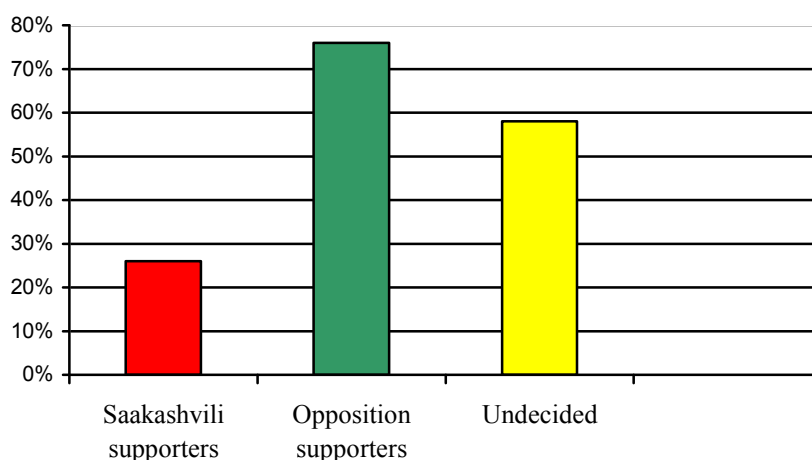
1. Poverty (81.3%)
2. Unemployment (56.1%)
3. Territorial conflicts in Abkhazia and Osetia (52.5%)
4. Relations with Russia (44.3%)
5. Inflation (41.3%)



Gr.15. Five, the most pertinent for Georgia problems

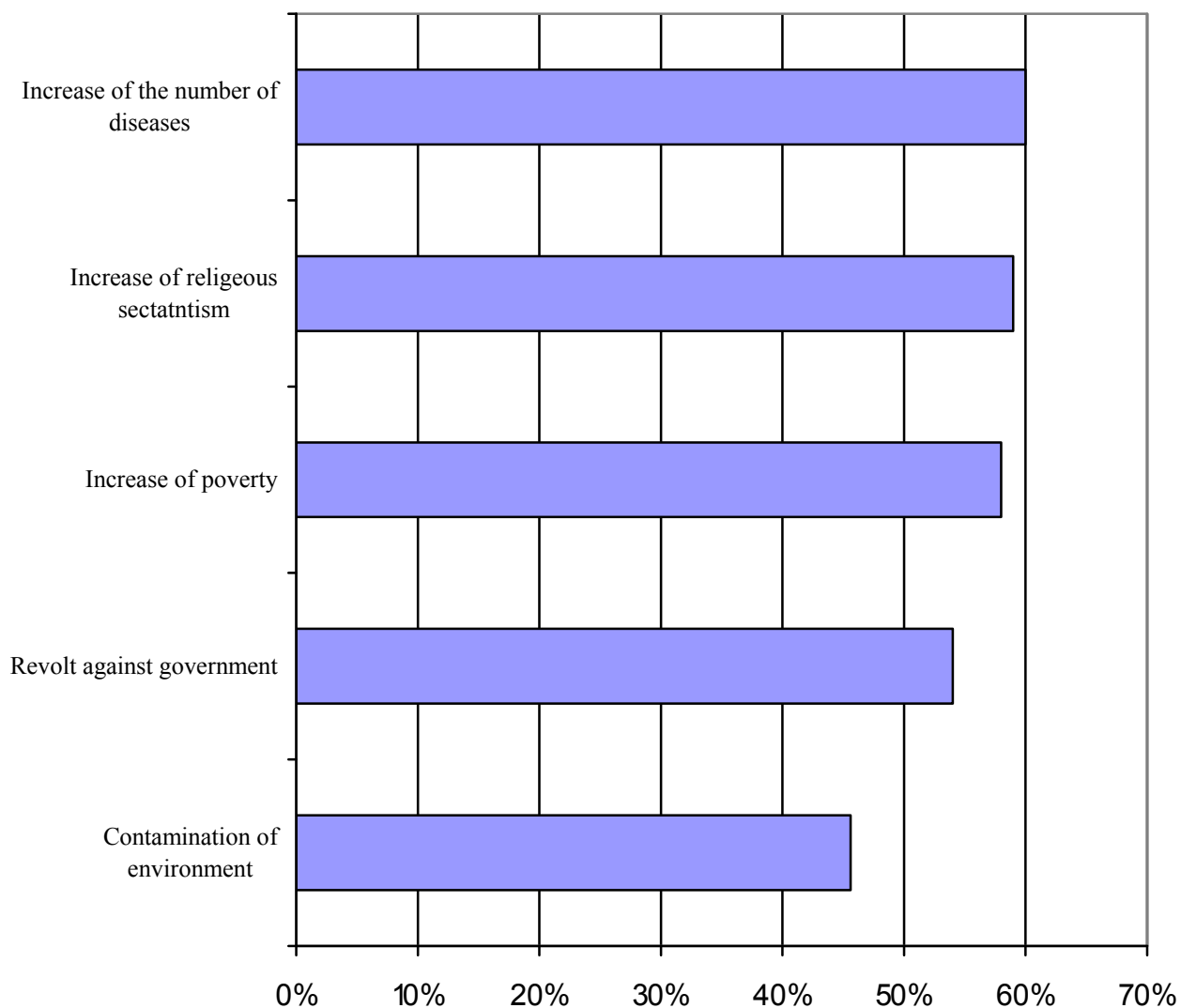
On the priority of poverty reduction point the answers to the question: *Where would you have invested additional funds in the budget?* 55.4% would direct resources to pensions and allowances, for 21.3% the target is education, for 19.5% health services, for 3.0% army and for 0.8% police.

More than half of the population (54.6%) has a feeling of insecurity. Security issue is especially acute among opposition supporters.



Gr.16. Question: *How secure do you feel yourself in Georgia?* Answer: *More insecure*

We asked respondents to estimate in coming 5 years the probability of risks presented in the list. The majority selected the increase of diseases.

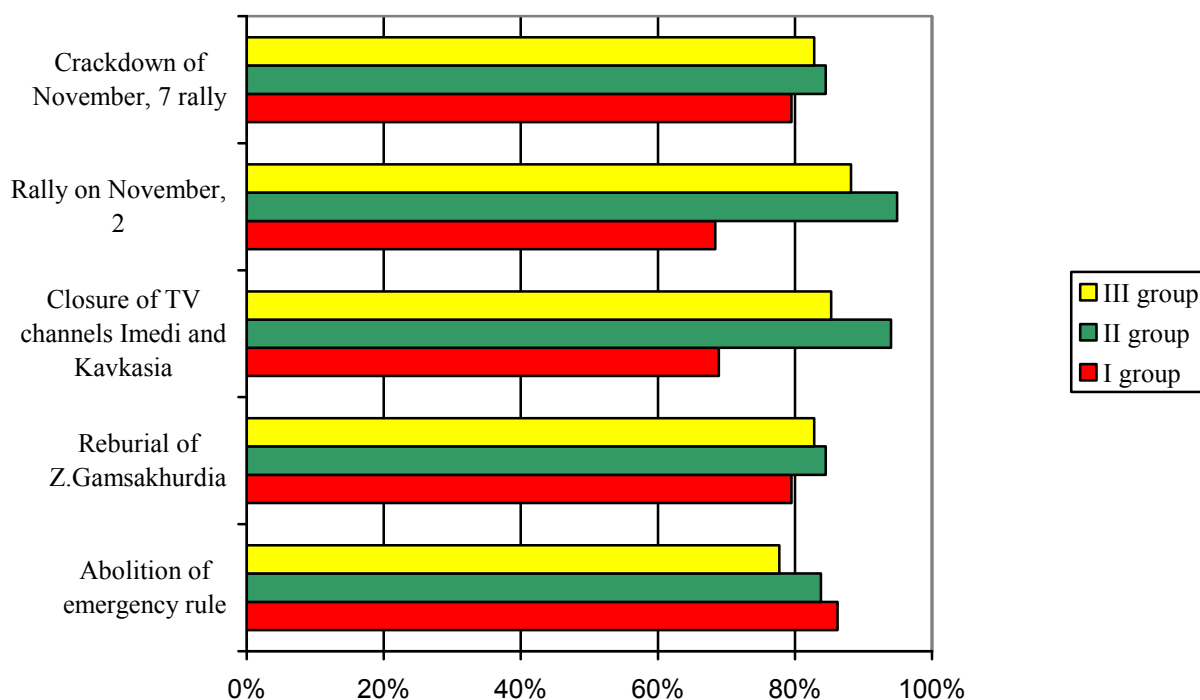


Gr.17. Risks, that Georgia can face

Important events of 2007

Among the events that took place in 2007, as the most important are perceived the following:

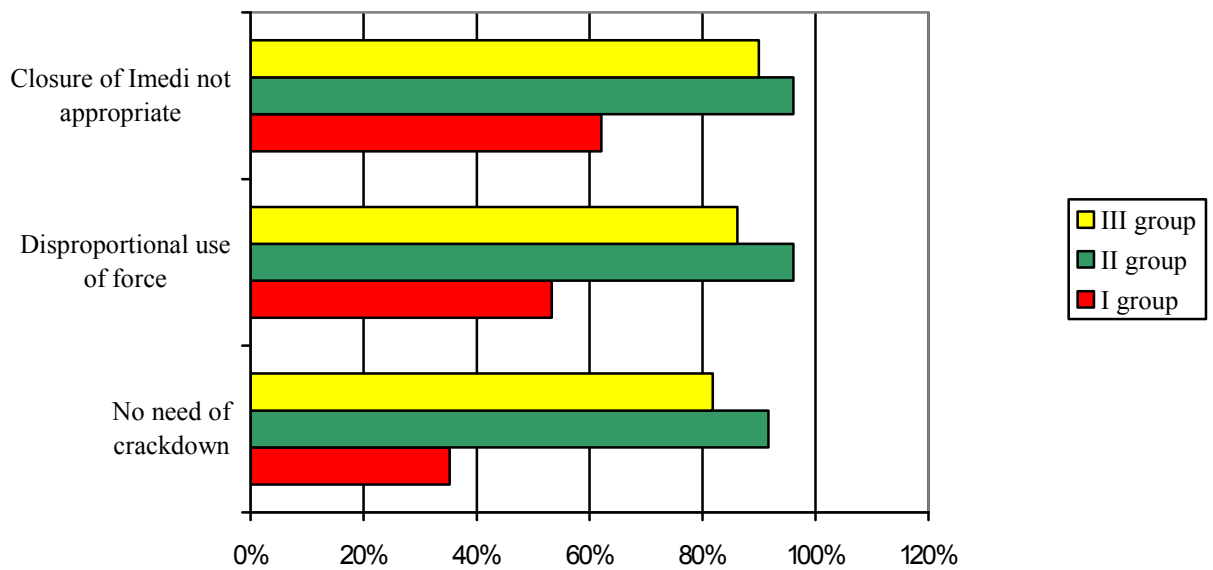
1. Crack down of the rally on November, 7 (87.6%)
2. November, 2 rally (85.3%)
3. Closure of TV channels *Imedi* and *Kavkasia* (84.0%)
4. Zviad Gamsakhurdia's reburial (82.5%)
5. Abolition of emergency rule (81.8%)



Gr.18. The most important events of 2007

Among the five, most often selected events four are connected with November events. Crackdown of November 7 rally, November 2 rally and closure of TV channels are estimated as important by more supporters of opposition, then by undecided, while the abolition of emergency rule is perceived as more important by Saakashvili supporters, and then by undecided. Reburial of the first president of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia in Tbilisi is considered as important by the bigger share of opposition supporters.

Population negatively evaluates government actions during November events. The closure of TV channel Imedi is regarded inappropriate by 84.4%, 80.8% considers that the government used disproportional force against peaceful demonstrators, according to 72.6% there was no need of crackdown. Opposition supporters and undecided are much more critical compared to Saakashvili supporters. But a critical attitude of quite a number of Saakashvili supporters is also to be noted.

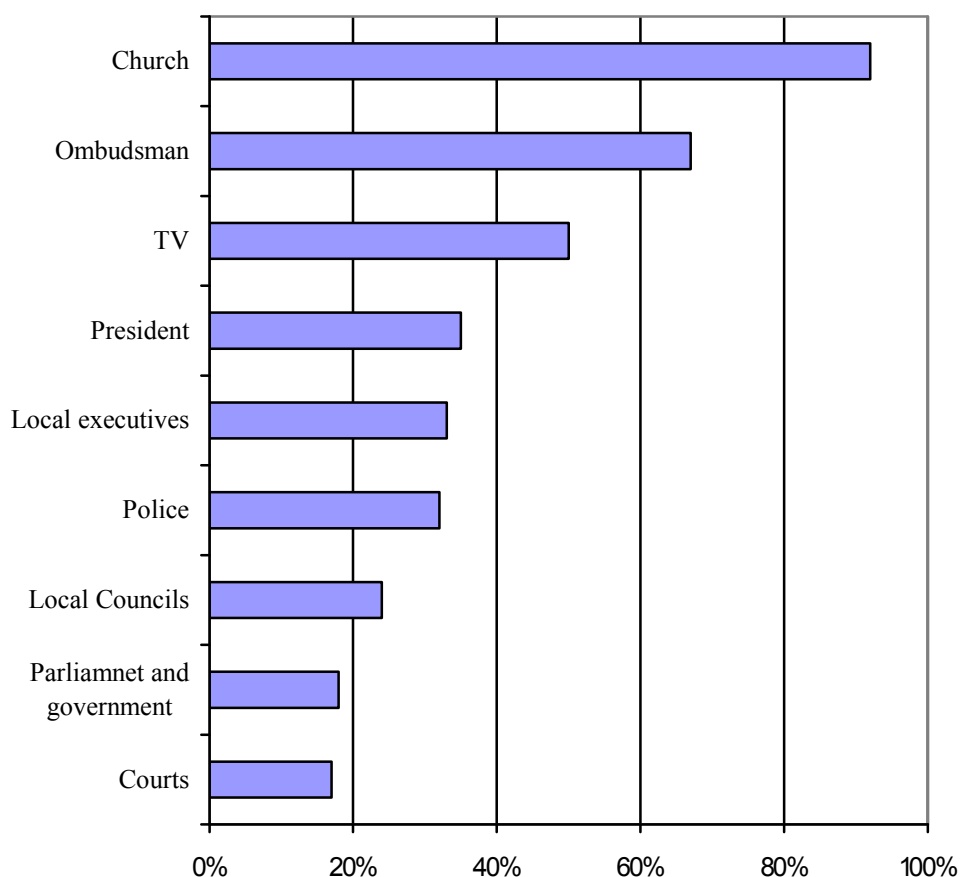


Gr.19. Estimation of government actions during November events

51.8% of surveyed imposed the entire responsibility for November, 7 events, on government, 20.8% distributed responsibility equally between government and opposition. Majority positively evaluates President Saakashvili's decision on calling early presidential elections. Such evaluation is given by 89.6% of Saakashvili and, 76.1% of opposition supporters and by 72.2% of undecided.

Trust

Trust towards institutions is the ground for any country's stability. church (Mosque, in case of Moslem population) enjoys the trust of the majority. The second most trusted is the ombudsman, followed by televisions. The least trusted are courts, parliament and government.



Gr.20. Trust to institutions

Low trust in state institutions and official information is also reflected in the answers to some other questions:

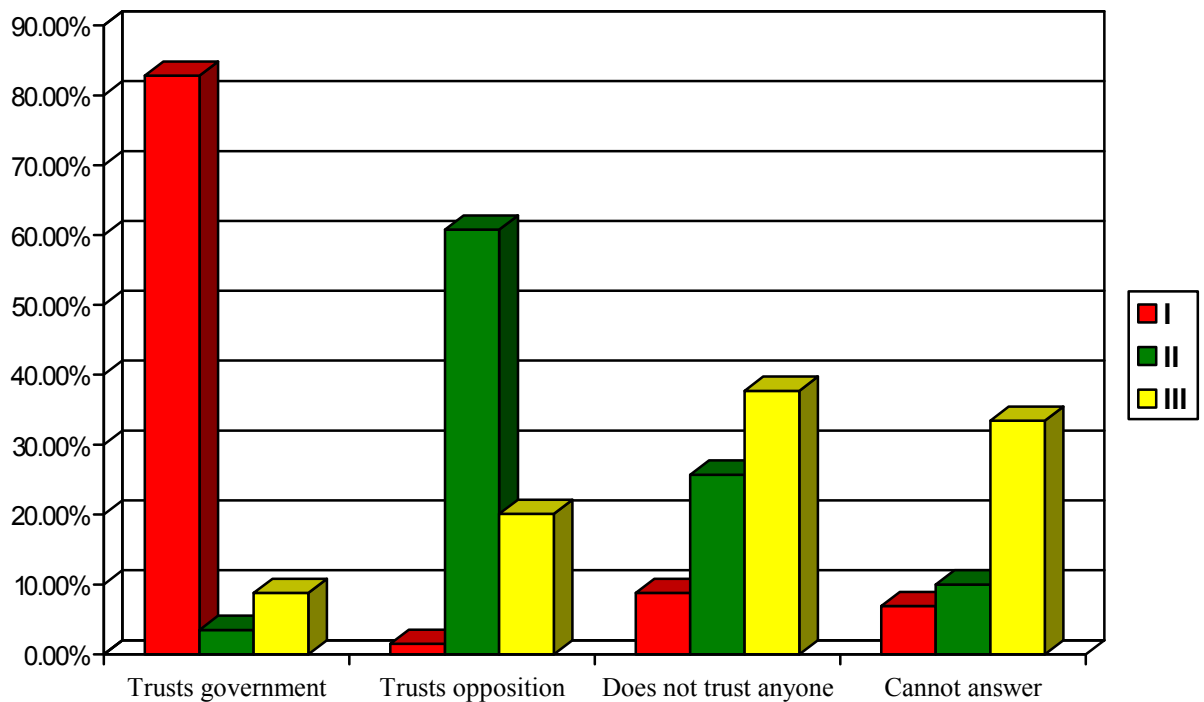
67.5% thinks that citizens of Georgia are not equal before the law. From the provided 12 item list the respondents most often choose kin and friends (58.8%), ombudsman (49.3%) and police as the subject for appeal for restoring the justice.

Only 10% believes that the death of the prime minister Zurab Zhvania was a consequence of incidence.

Only 8.9% considers the sentence passed to opposition politician Irakli Batiashvili to be just.

44.9% believes in majority of accusations of ex-defense minister Irakli Okruashvili made against president Saakashvili.

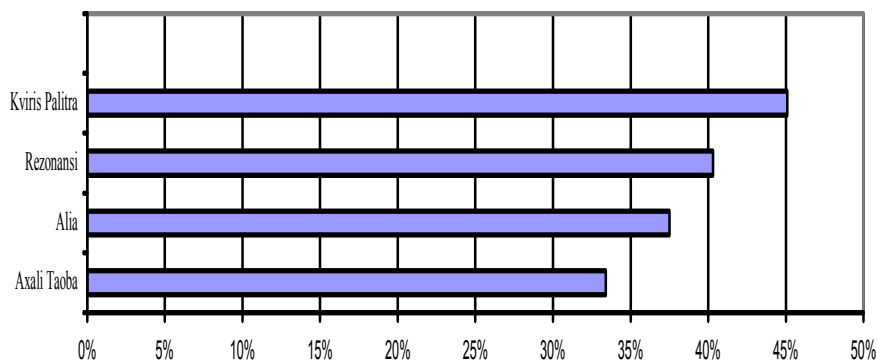
Trust between the main political subjects is almost equally distributed. 25.5% of respondents trust government, 27.5% the opposition 27.1% does not trust either and 20.0% could not answer the question. Saakashvili supporters are more consolidated, 82.8% of them trust the government, while only 60.8% of opposition supporters trust united opposition, and 25.7% mistrust both sides. The biggest share of undecided (37.7%) does not trust either party, 20.1% trusts the opposition and 8.8% the government.



Gr.21. Trust to government and opposition

Media

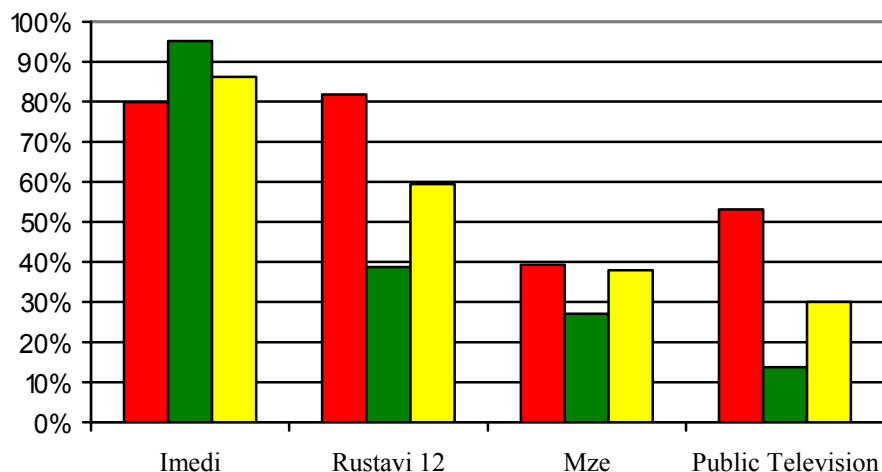
The majority (67.3%) closely follows the political events in the country. Among them 97.3% does this by watching television. On the information provided by the friends and newspapers rely 63.2% and 45.7% correspondingly. Among the newspapers Kviris Palitra is perceived as the most independent.



Gr.22. Question: *To what extent are the following newspapers in your opinion independent from the president and the government?* Answer: *Mostly independent*

The news of different TV channels enjoy different degree of trust. The most trusted are informational broadcasts of *Imedi* (87.3%), then of *Rustavi 2* (58.9%), *Mze* (34.9%) and *Public*

Television (30.8%). Electorate differs in expressed trust to TV channels. *Imedi* is more trusted by opposition supporters, all other main media by Saakashvili supporters.

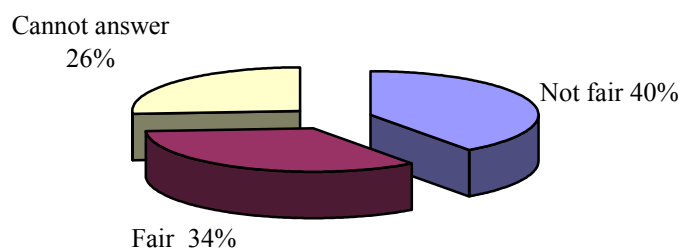


Gr.23. Trust to the news of different TV Channels

Very few read newspapers and even less listen to the radio.

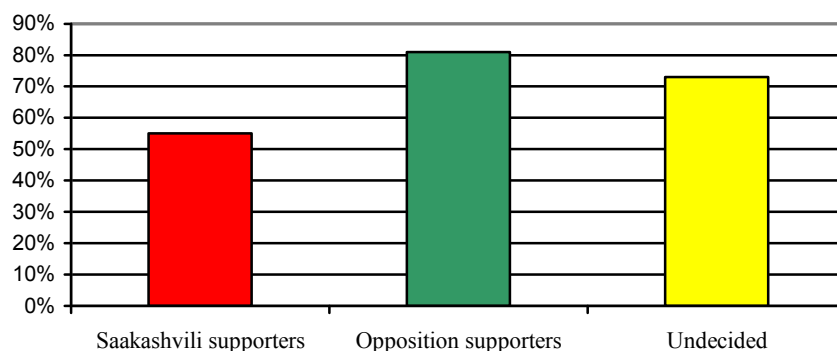
Elections and political preferences

The biggest part of the surveyed (83.7%) expressed readiness to vote. The supporters do not differ in this regard. 40.3% does not believe that the elections will be fair.



Gr.24. Question: *In your opinion the presidential elections will be fair or not?*

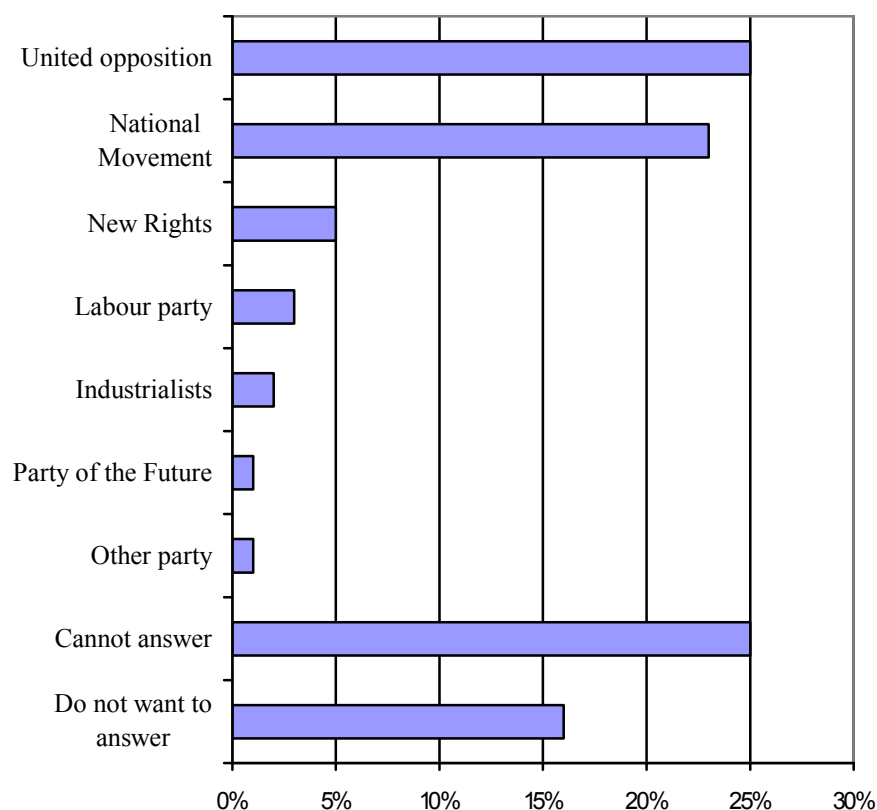
For the equal division of power between the parliament and the president opt 70.4% of the respondents.



Gr.25. Question: *What do you support: the country to be ruled by the president with much power or the power to be equally distributed between the president and the parliament?* Answer: *To be equally distributed.*

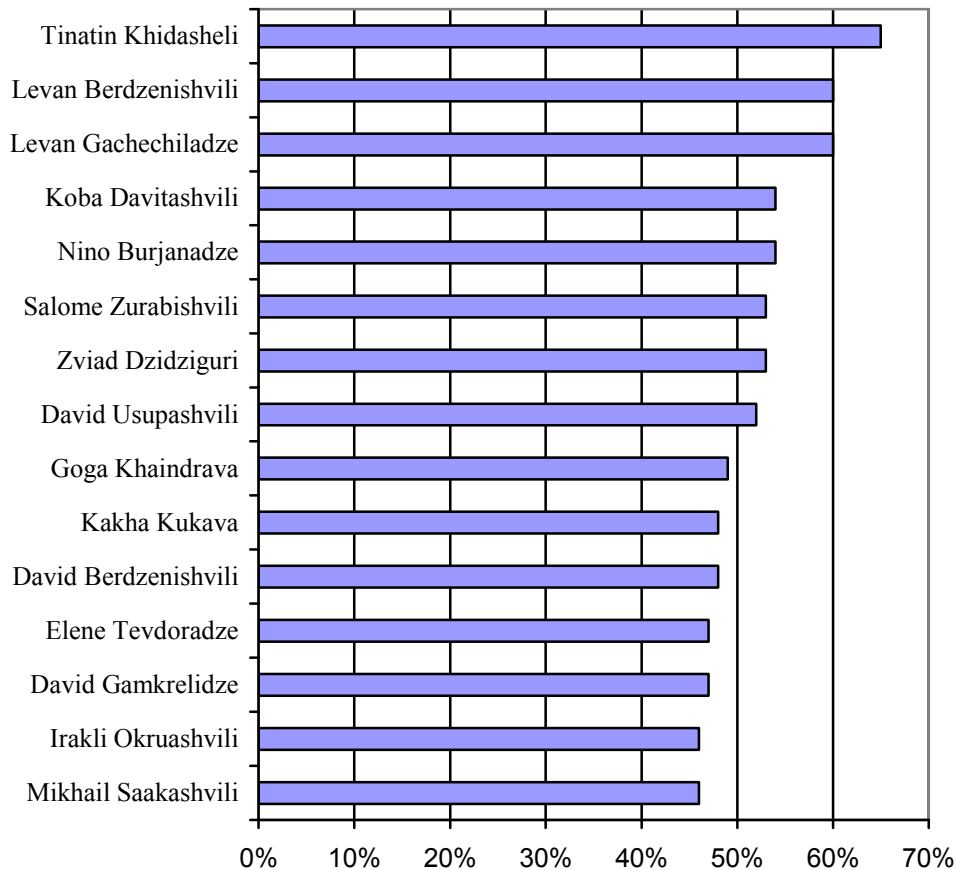
The parliamentary election timing in spring is supported by 53.0%. Spring is preferred over autumn by more supporters of opposition (62.3%) than of undecided (36.9%) and Saakashvili supporters (12.0%).

Among the parties the most popular is United Opposition, followed by National Movement, other parties lag much behind. There is quite a big portion of those who did not express their preference.

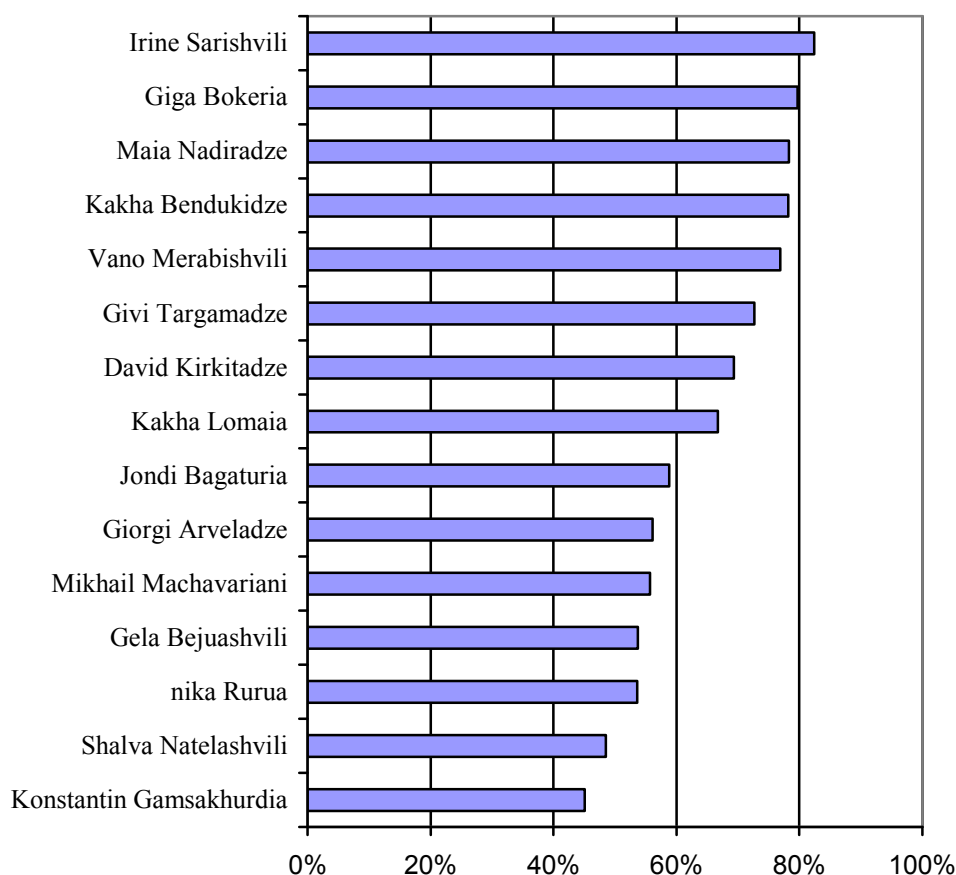


Gr.26. Party preferences

Respondents were requested to estimate whether they liked, disliked, neither liked nor disliked or did not know 36 politicians. Among the fifteen most liked politicians 12 represent United Opposition. The most liked politicians are Tinatin Khidasheli, Levan Berdzenishvili and Levan Gachechiladze, the least liked are Irina Sarishvili, Giga Bokeria and Maia Nadiradze. Among the fifteen the least liked politicians 11 represent the ruling party- National Movement.



Gr.27. Question: *Please estimate how much do you like the following politicians.* Answer: *Mostly like*



Gr.28. Question: *Please estimate how much do you like the following politicians.* Answer: *Mostly dislike*

Democracy

81.3% of respondents consider democracy as the best form of governance, but only 24.1% thinks that there is democracy in Georgia.

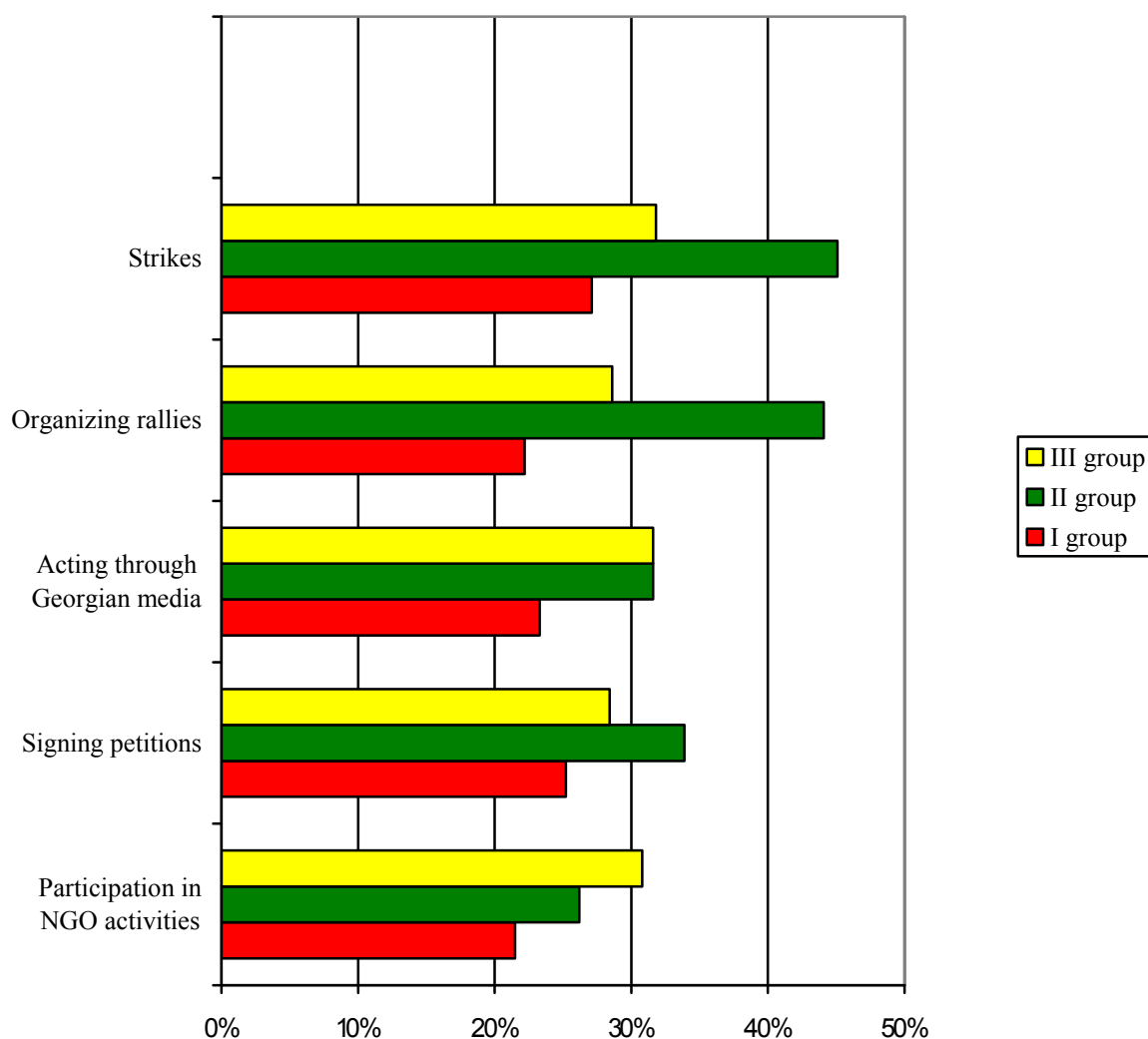
60.8% thinks that the solution of the problems facing Georgia is possible only through the active participation of population, but only 22.3% believes that an ordinary person can influence government decisions.

54.8% thinks that the government does not take into an account public opinion.

Presented below are the activities that respondents consider to be effective in influencing government:

1. Strike (33.7%)
2. Sanctioned mass rallies (30.8%)
3. Acting through Georgian media (28.9%)
4. Signing petitions (28.5%)
5. Participation in NGO activities (26.5%)

Bigger share of opposition supporters considers strikes and rallies effective.

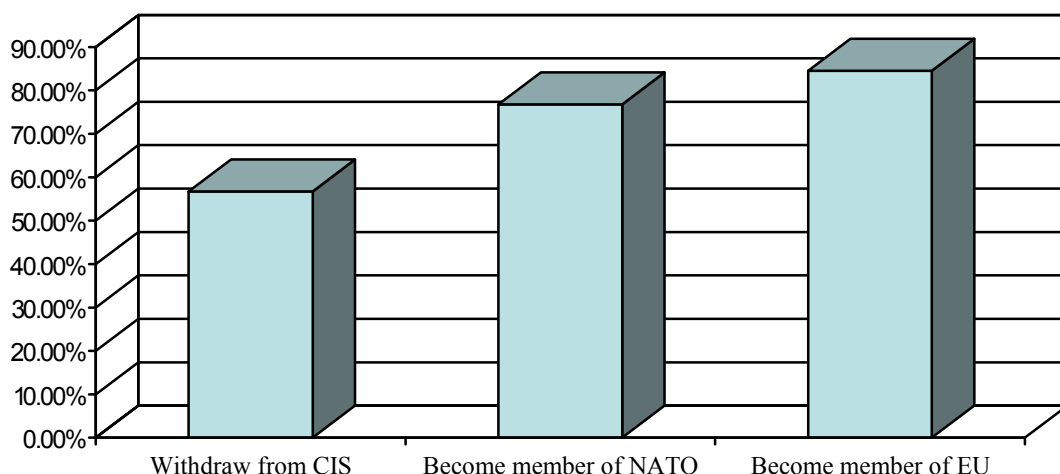


Gr.29. Effective ways of influencing government

External orientations of electorate

One third of the surveyed (32.1%) thinks that the fate of Georgia depends mostly on Georgia (I group-37.3%, II group-27.9%, III group-31.9%), 30.3% thinks that it depends on other countries, and 28.5% that it depends equally on Georgia and other countries (9.0% could not answer the question). Therefore external orientation of the country is of a paramount importance at least for then two-third of the population.

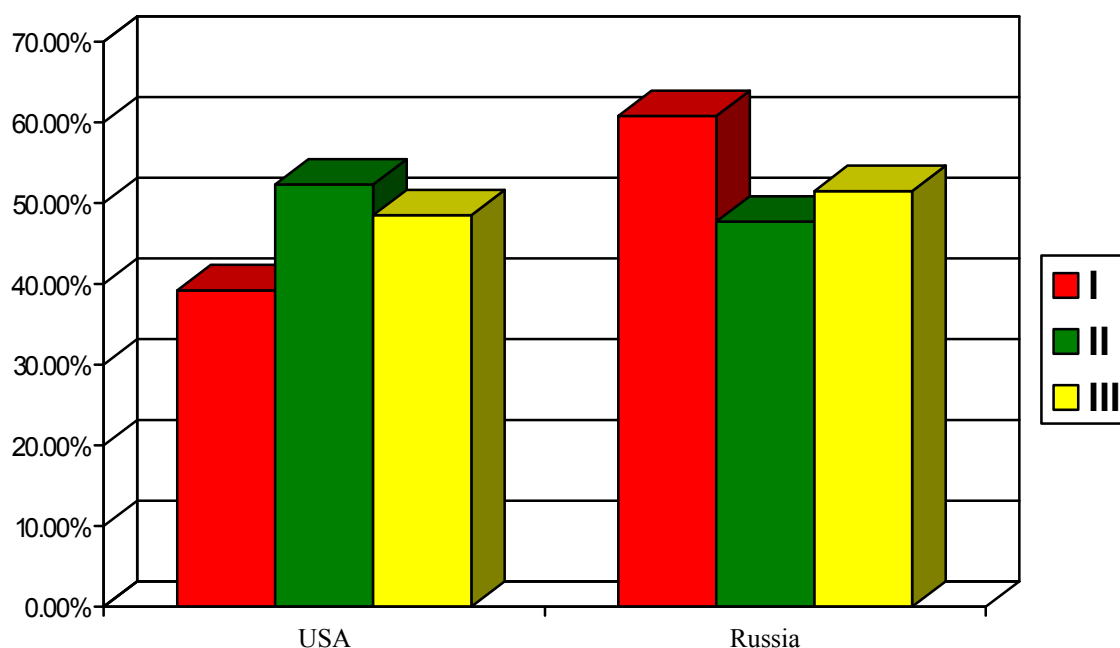
The majority is for Georgia's withdrawal from CIS and supports the strivings of the country to become the member of NATO and EU.



Gr.30. External orientations

41.8% of population expects Georgia to become member of NATO in a period from 1 to 5 years. In the above discussed external orientations supporters of different candidates do not differ.

The choice between the two poles of an external orientation of the country Russia and US is an issue of a political discourse and often even of accusations. Majority of the respondents made a choice in favor of Russia. 52.6% chose Russia over the US. Preference for Russia slightly decreased since 2006, when it was preferred by 59.9%.



Gr.31. Answers to the question: *Please, choose between the following two statements:*

1. *America is far away and could not help. Georgia should do anything, including stopping cooperation with US to improve relations with Russia.*
2. *In today's world, Georgia included, America decides what will happen, therefore cooperation with US is important. Russia cannot do much any more.*

Majority of Saakashvili's supporters make choice in favour of Russia, while opposition supporters opt for US. Russia is a preferred choice of undecided. Ukraine (61.8%), US (61.2%) and countries of EU (50.4%) are considered as the most friendly to Georgia.

42.9% thinks that US strives enough for establishing democracy in Georgia. A bigger share of Saakashvili supporters are convinced of the efforts of the US (68.7%), compared to supporters of opposition (32.6%) or undecided (35.5%). A bit less, 40.7% considers EU efforts for establishing democracy in the country as enough (61.7% of Saakashvili supporters, 35.5% of opposition supporters and 32.9% of undecided).

Concluding remarks

The three groups, i.e. the supporters of Saakashvili, opposition and undecided differ in a number of background characteristics, as well as in their evaluations and attitudes on governance, political figures and country events.

The groups do not differ in their attitudes on external orientation of the country. The only difference concerns the preference expressed to Russia by Saakashvili's supporters and undecided and to the USA expressed by supporters of opposition.

Taken everything together the undecided are closer to opposition than to Saakashvili supporters.

It is not easy to make prognosis as to who will win in the coming presidential elections. One reason for this is that about half of the surveyed does not know or reveal their choice, although the positioning of the undecided on different issues are closer to opposition than to Saakashvili supporters permits to expect a second round in elections.

The huge mass of undecided is a reserve for candidates and therefore any actions of the candidates in pre-election period can produce major changes.

We hope that despite the short time left before the elections, the results of the study will still allow the candidates to target their campaign more precisely, to provide the population with more and also more specific information on what they plan to do and how.

Everything should be done by the government, media, civil society and international organizations, governments of the countries friendly to Georgia to minimize anxiety of population observed during carrying out the study, associated with the free expression of political will. Only in this case it will be possible to say that the citizens of Georgia made an informed and free choice, only in this case the population will share with the elected president the responsibility for the future of the country.